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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART IV. THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Section 8 - Northern South America and the Caribbean

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03048

IV.8 NORTHERN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

1. This chapter covers UNHCR activities in Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Suriname, Venezuela, Jamaica and other Caribbean countries.

General Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

2. At 31 December 1993, northern South America and the Caribbean hosted a population of some 8,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, the majority Haitians, followed by Cubans, Chileans, Eastern Europeans and various other Latin Americans.

3. The largest number of Haitian refugees is in the Dominican Republic, whereas Cubans and Chileans have found asylum mainly in Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela. The largest concentration of Eastern Europeans is in Colombia. A considerable number of African refugees, mainly Western Saharans and Sudanese, are located in Cuba.

4. Most of the refugees are of urban origin and live in or around the capital cities. Forty-two per cent of the total refugee population are men, women account for 25 per cent and children 33 per cent. Their level of education varies from primary schooling to university degrees. In 1993 UNHCR assisted about one quarter of the total refugee population in the region.

5. In Colombia, the Government estimates that a sizeable number of internally displaced persons exist in the country as a result of generalized violence and deterioration in the human rights situation.

Programme objectives and priorities

6. The UNHCR Regional Office for northern South America and the Caribbean has established the following regional and country objectives for 1994 and 1995:

(a) **Promotion and dissemination of refugee law**: UNHCR will continue to promote accession to international instruments by countries in the region which have not yet done so. In particular, emphasis will be placed on appropriate legislation to implement the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in Venezuela and to ensure closer adherence to Convention criteria in Ecuador and Jamaica. More support will also be given to the Dominican Republic and Colombia. The international principles of refugee protection and asylum, as embodied in the 1951 Convention, will continue to be disseminated through seminars, lectures, conferences and round table discussions.

(b) **Assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees**: The focus will continue to be on providing asylum-seekers and refugees with basic initial short-term care and maintenance assistance, counselling to promote self-sufficiency, and minimum support for income-generating activities where appropriate and feasible.

(c) **Rationalization and reassessment of assistance**: Priority will be placed on the further rationalization of assistance and the application of a regional approach adapted to each country. Assistance limits set during 1994 will continue to be implemented in 1995. Given the current economic and political situation, local integration of refugees is extremely difficult. With care and maintenance assistance limited in order to promote refugee self-sufficiency, attention to counselling and orientation is of utmost importance in the search for durable solutions. Workshops initiated in late 1993 with implementing partners in Spanish-speaking refugee receiving countries, will continue with selected partners in English-speaking countries in 1994.

7. Additional stress will be placed on assessing the assistance resources and implementing capacity of operational partners in the region. An inventory of these resources for all countries in the region is expected to be completed by early 1995.

Arrangements for implementation and related inputs

8. The main implementing partners of UNHCR in the region are the Conferencia Episcopal Venezolana in Venezuela, the Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social in Colombia, the Comite Pro-Refugiados of the Conferencia Episcopal Ecuatoriana in Ecuador, the Guyana Council of Churches, the Centro de Trabajo Social Dominicano in the Dominican Republic, the Christian Council of Churches in the Bahamas, the Pater Ahlbrinck Stichting in Suriname and the Government of Cuba and the Cuban Red Cross in Cuba.

General Programmes

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

9. Basic material assistance, counselling and legal services were provided as planned.

10. Voluntary repatriations to Chile continued at a greater rate than originally planned, particularly from Cuba, Ecuador and Venezuela. A total of 798 Chileans repatriated in 1993, necessitating an allocation from the Programme Reserve to cover the increase. The repatriation of Haitians from the Dominican Republic did not take place as foreseen owing to the situation prevailing in Haiti; however, a total of 1,796 Haitian refugees did repatriate, mainly from Cuba, in the first two months of the year.

11. Political and cultural differences made the local integration of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and in Cuba difficult; consequently, allocations in 1993 were not fully utilized.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

12. While no particular changes are foreseen in the overall direction of the programme in the region, greater emphasis will be placed on rationalizing and improving assistance in care and maintenance and self-sufficiency activities. Similarly, educational assistance will continue to focus increasingly on vocational training, at both the secondary and post-secondary level.

13. Agency support costs within the programme are being reduced on the whole through greater rationalization and monitoring of administrative expenses by implementing partners. In Jamaica, a projected change in implementing arrangements in 1994 is also expected to reduce agency support costs.

14. The voluntary repatriation of refugees in the region will continue. Repatriations to Chile may increase as a result of the application of the Cessation Clauses issued in March 1994. Repatriation of some 1,000 Haitians has been planned, should the internal situation in Haiti improve.

15. Local integration assistance in the Dominican Republic should follow the trend of 1993 with increased emphasis on education, skills training and income-generation activities. In Cuba, a government project to incorporate Haitian refugees into a local housing development plan is expected to further integration.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

Care and maintenance

16. Assistance in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela will continue along the lines of the previous year, covering food, health, shelter and domestic needs. Proposed allocations show a slight increase to reflect higher costs in selected sectors. A reduced project is maintained for Haitian refugees in Cuba to promote their local integration.

Voluntary repatriation

17. The allocation for the regional voluntary repatriation project will be reduced substantially in 1995, primarily because of the predicted decrease in repatriations to Chile under UNHCR's auspices, which is expected to be completed by August 1995, in line with the Cessation Clauses. For 1995, funds to facilitate the eventual repatriation of Haitians have been maintained in this regional project.

Local settlement

18. In the Dominican Republic activities promoting local settlement of Haitian refugees will continue, focusing on education training and income generation. Of continuing importance in the facilitation of self-sufficiency of refugees is the cooperation by the Dominican Government to legalize the stay of refugees and allow them to work.

Special Programmes

Education Account

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993 and 1994 planned implementation

19. UNHCR plans to continue educational assistance for selected refugees at the post-secondary level in the region in 1994.

(b) 1995 programme proposals

20. Educational assistance at the post-secondary level is expected to continue in Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic in 1995. Priority in approving educational assistance requests will be given to those refugee students pursuing professional and/or marketable vocational training courses that will enhance their chances of securing employment.

Other Trust Funds

21. The repatriation of Surinamese refugees from French Guiana and their reinsertion was largely completed in 1993.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

22. 1993 programme delivery and administrative support costs for the region were lower than planned primarily due to events in Haiti. Although the outflow of Haitian asylum-seekers to neighbouring countries decreased substantially after the first few months of the year, politically motivated violence and a general climate of insecurity forced the evacuation of international staff in November 1993 and the suspension of the UNHCR Liaison Office in Port-au-Prince.

23. Offices in Suriname and French Guiana were closed following the successful repatriation of refugees and their reintegration in Suriname, resulting in the discontinuation of four posts in the course of the year as planned.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

24. Following the suspension of UNHCR's presence in Haiti, all three posts were discontinued. New posts may be created when changes in the Haitian situation allow for the reinstatement of a UNHCR presence.

25. In Venezuela, two new posts have been created: a Public Information Officer to cover activities in the various countries of the region; and an additional driver, in view of the worsening security and transport conditions in Caracas.

(c) 1995 programme proposals

26. Initial estimates of programme delivery and administrative costs in the region in 1995 are similar to 1994, assuming no major changes in the programme.

27. As the situation in Haiti does not appear likely to be resolved in the near future and will continue to necessitate UNHCR staff to assist refugees in the neighbouring Dominican Republic, these posts have been extended through 1995.

28. In Venezuela, a post of Regional Coordinator for Refugee Law Promotion and Training has been created effective 1 January 1995 to promote a comprehensive regional approach, building on the CIREFCA principles and the Cartagena Declaration.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN NORTHERN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994			1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED By 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION		SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
			GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)		
				EMERGENCY FUND	
55.1	–	–	Venezuela		–
				CARE AND MAINTENANCE	
37.8	35.4	35.4	Colombia		47.5
241.9 a/	50.0	50.0	Cuba		46.9
71.7	78.5	78.5	Ecuador		84.2
76.9	161.1	58.7	Venezuela		68.0
2.4 a/	–	–	Dominican Republic		–
20.0	20.0	20.0	Regional Project		20.0
				VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	
377.8	232.4	244.4	Regional Project		211.6
255.8 c/	362.9	–	Haiti		–
				LOCAL SETTLEMENT	
1.5 a/	–	–	Cuba		–
21.2 a/	–	–	Venezuela		–
–	–	–	Colombia		–
1,225.0 b/	985.1	534.1	Dominican Republic		533.8
163.4	–	–	Regional Project		–
				RESETTLEMENT	
6.1 a/	–	–	Colombia		–
0.7 a/	–	–	Ecuador		–
38.2 a/	–	–	Haiti		–
2.6 a/	–	–	Cuba		–
				PROGRAMME DELIVERY	
–	–	392.1	Dominican Republic	See Annexes I a and II a	390.9
–	–	148.6	Haiti	See Annexes I a and II a	134.1
–	–	882.3	Venezuela	See Annexes I a and II a	887.6
2,598.1	1,925.4	2,444.1		SUB-TOTAL OPERATIONS	2,424.6
				ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	
–	–	51.3	Dominican Republic	See Annexes I b and II b	51.0
744.7	820.5	114.0	Venezuela	See Annexes I b and II b	108.6
3,342.8	**2,745.9**	**2,609.4**		**TOTAL (1)**	**2,584.2**
			SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)		
				EDUCATION ACCOUNT	
1.9	–	2.4	Colombia	2 university scholarships	2.5
10.5	17.7	11.7	Regional Project	9 university scholarships	10.2
15.5	–	3.6	Dominican Republic	5 university scholarships	10.0
				OTHER TRUST FUNDS	
627.3	–	–	Suriname		–
0.3	–	–	Cuba		–
0.8	–	–	Colombia		–
33.0	–	–	Venezuela		–
				ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT	
72.6	37.0	68.6	Venezuela	Junior Professional Officer	27.6
41.5	65.0	–	Dominican Republic	Junior Professional Officer	–
43.2	27.0	–	Suriname	Junior Professional Officer	–
846.6	**146.7**	**86.3**		**TOTAL (2)**	**50.3**
4,189.4	**2,892.6**	**2,695.7**		**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**2,634.5**

a/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation
b/ of which US$ 1,575 incurred against Overall Allocation
c/ obligation incurred against the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation